

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 GABORO 02386 290929Z
ACTION AF-08

INFO OCT-01 EUR-12 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-04 H-01
INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01 SP-02 SS-15
USIA-06 ACDA-07 OMB-01 MC-02 TRSE-00 ARA-06 AID-05
/100 W

-----290932Z 018460 /20

P R 281530Z DEC 76
FM AMEMBASSY GABORONE
TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 9185
INFO AMEMBASSY DAR ES SALAAM
AMEMBASSY LUSAKA
AMEMBASSY LONDON
AMEMBASSY MAPUTO
AMEMBASSY PRETORIA
USUN NEW YORK 379

C O N F I D E N T I A L GABORONE 2386

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MASS, PFOR, BC, CH, RH
SUBJECT: REPORTED GOB DECISION TO ACQUIRE PRC ARMS AND ADVISORS

REF: A. GABORONE 2364 (NOTAL) B. LUSAKA 3381 (NOTAL)

1. SPECIAL BRANCH OFFICER INFORMED EMBOFF DECEMBER 24 ON
STRICTLY CONFIDENTIAL BASIS THAT GOB HAS AGREED TO ACCEPT
CHINESE ARMS AND LIMITED NUMBER OF ADVISORS TO BOLSTER ITS
ABILITY TO COUNTER RHODESIAN VIOLATIONS OF BOTSWANA'S
TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY. SEVENTY (70) TONS OF WEAPONS (MIX
OF RIFLES, ROCKET LAUNCHERS, ETC.) DUE TO ARRIVE "ANY DAY"
ALONG WITH "NO MORE THAN HALF-DOZEN" ADVISORS. SOURCE
DOES NOT KNOW EXACT COMPOSITION OF WEAPONS SHIPMENT. IN
RESPONSE TO QUESTION, SOURCE DID NOT KNOW WHETHER GOB STILL
WANTS AR-18'S WHICH ARE IN HIS OPINION NOW "SUPERFLUOUS".
HE NOTED THEIR PURCHASE WOULD HAVE MADE "SEVERE DENT"
IN GOB BUDGET WHILE CHINESE ARMS ARE "FREE".
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2. BECAUSE GOB DECISION REPORTED ABOVE WOULD REPRESENT
AN IMPORTANT NEW DEPARTURE IN GOB POLICY, WE HAVE TAKEN
INFORMAL, LOW-KEY SOUNDINGS IN GOB AND WITH INFOMRED
COLLAAGUES TO TEST REPORT. IN ABSENCE U.K. HIGH
COMMISSIONER (OUT TODAY) I SAW HEAD OF CHANCERY WHO

(A) HAD HEARD RUMORS OF ACTIVE PRC ARMS OFFER FOR SEVERAL MONTHS, (B) HAD DISCOUNTED SUCH REPORTS UNTIL RECENTLY BUT NOW BOTH HIGH COMMISSIONER AND HE ARE READY TO BELIEVE ABOVE REPORT MAY BE TRUE, PARTICULARLY IN LIGHT OF UK-US "LACK OF SUCCESS" IN DELIVERING RIFLES, AND (C) SAID THAT GOB DEPUTY COMMISSIONER OF POLICE MERAFHE HAS BEEN ABSENT IN DAR ES SALAAM IN RECENT DAYS WHICH HIGH COMMISSION ASSUMED WAS RELATED TO PRC ARMS SUPPLY.

3. IN AME CONNECTION DCM CALLED ON MINEXTAFF SECRETARY MPOTOKWANE WHO REAFFIRMED WHAT MINISTER MOGWE SAID LAST WEEK (REF A), NAMELY THAT GOB HAS MADE NO FIRM DECISION ABOUT ARMS ACQUISITION. HE MAINTAINED GOB IS STILL CASTING ABOUT FOR BEST ARMS DEAL, SPECIFICALLY REFERRING TO STANDING SOVIET OFFER.

4. COMMENT: ALTHOUGH GOB MINEXTAFF SECRETARY SAID NO DECISION HAS BEEN MADE, THE SEQUENCE OF RECENT EVENTS, ESPECIALLY OVER THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS, LENDS A CERTAIN CREDIBILITY TO THE REPORT THAT GOB HAS DECIDED TO ACCEPT ARMS OFFER FROM PRC. OPPOSITION MEMBERS OF PARLIAMENT HAVE BEEN CALLING PUBLICLY FOR GOB TO REQUEST MILITARY ASSISTANCE FROM SOVIETS AND CUBANS. AMBASSADOR SOLODOVNIKOV CLEARLY INTENDED TO PUT ADDITIONAL PUBLIC PRESSURE ON GOB BY MEANS OF HIS DECEMBER 17 PRESS STATEMENT IN LUSKA A(REF B). STILL, PRESIDENT KHAMA, MOGWE, AND OTHERS WHO WERE UNCOMFORTABLE WITH SOVIET ROLE IN ANGOLA, PROBABLY DO NOT TRUST SOVIET MOTIVES IN SOUTHERN AFRICA. CONVERSELY, GOB HAS NO DOUBT BEEN IMPRESSED
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WITH GENERALLY LOW-KEY CHINESE PRESENCE HERE AND PERFORMANCE IN AFRICA. FROM GOB PERSPECTIVE, ACCEPTING CHINESE OFFER COULD BE BEST WAS OF (A) SILENCING OPPOSITION CRITICS CLAIMING THAT GOB NOT PROTECTING BOTSWANA'S TERRITORIAL INTEGRITY, (B) KEEPING SOVIET INFLUENCE HERE TO A MINIMUM, AND (C) OBTAINING NEEDED ARMS AT NO COST.

NORLAND

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NNN

Message Attributes

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Margaret P. Grafeld
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